Youth

Is modern art sick, or are we?

The Word and "West Side Story"

An artist who gave all to God

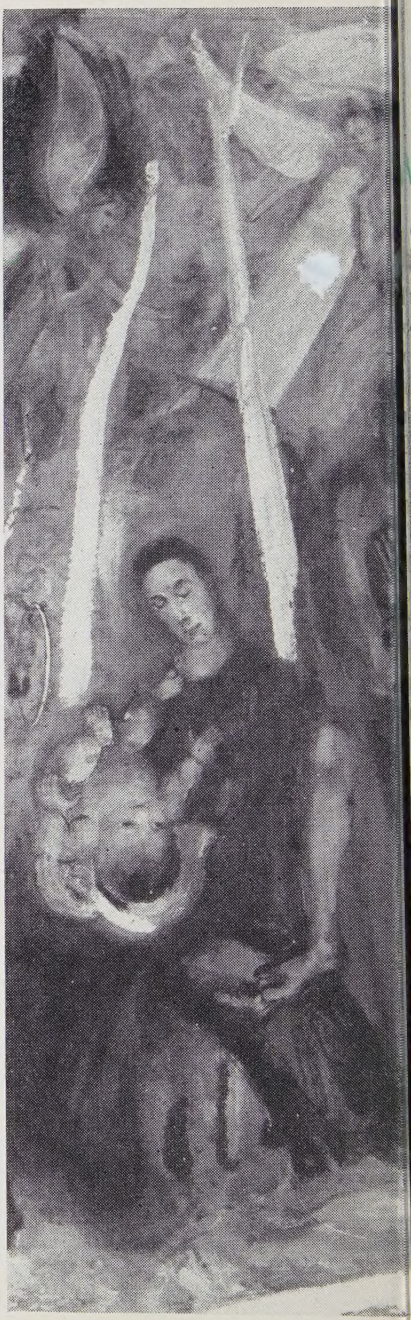
Religious Education
School of Religion

...the word

"I hate you!" shouts a girl bitterly at her mother. A stinging slap across the girl's face is the mother's instant response. There is a lingering, empty silence. Then the daughter blinks back tears. And both begin to sob. For the first time in two tense weeks, a mother and a daughter find each other's arms and each other's understanding. The honest conversation that follows is what both ached for, but neither was willing to admit the need for.

Genuine communication is a deeply personal thing. Words are so often empty of meaning. We want to say so much but words fail us. Often we are the master of pretty phrases but say nothing. Expressing ourselves takes more than spoken or written words. The vocabulary of communication includes all that we are—our attitudes, our actions, our intentions, our total personality.

Is it not so with God? To know God is a deeply personal thing. And certainly God expresses himself to us in more than words. God is not only found in the written words of our sacred writings but more so in



Detail from REST AMONG THE TREES ON TO

vas made flesh

he living Word of the attitudes, actions, intentions, and total being f those people about whom the written words speak. This ex-ression of himself—God's Word—is made known to us in daily uman life through love and indifference, in truth and falseness, darkness and light, in death and birth, in saints and sinners. an we not learn rightness from both tragedy and success? Some-mes God's Word hits us so hard that we know, if only for a noment, that we are right or we are wrong.

Such an event is the Incarnation—when God came into the ife of the world. Nothing in history equals the world-wide impact f this event. Yet annually about this time of the year we need to e reminded that at that moment in history God's Word became uman and lived among us. And because in Jesus Christ some nen saw revealed God's fullest expression of himself, mankind has ot been the same since.

Yet even his own people did not know him or accept him. He vas rejected, mainly because his Word made too many people un-omfortable. And so Jesus Christ was crucified. Even today we ecome so involved in words that we do not see the Word. A astor urges his people to live at peace with those they dislike he most and he is called a trouble-maker, a subversive, a nigger-over. An artist depicts the honest horror and human shame of hrist's crucifixion and he is accused of being anti-Christ.

The New Testament is full of distinctions drawn between those vho look at life and those who see it. Truth hurts when we do not vant to hear it. Truth helps when we accept it and let it work its vay in our lives, despite the possible consequences. And the conse-uences should not frighten us if we truly believe that God loves s no matter who or what threatens us.

God's Word does not die when those who speak his truth and ve his love are silenced. If you have ears, a mind, a heart, then isten, think, and be sensitive, for his Word dwells among us. ▼

Youth

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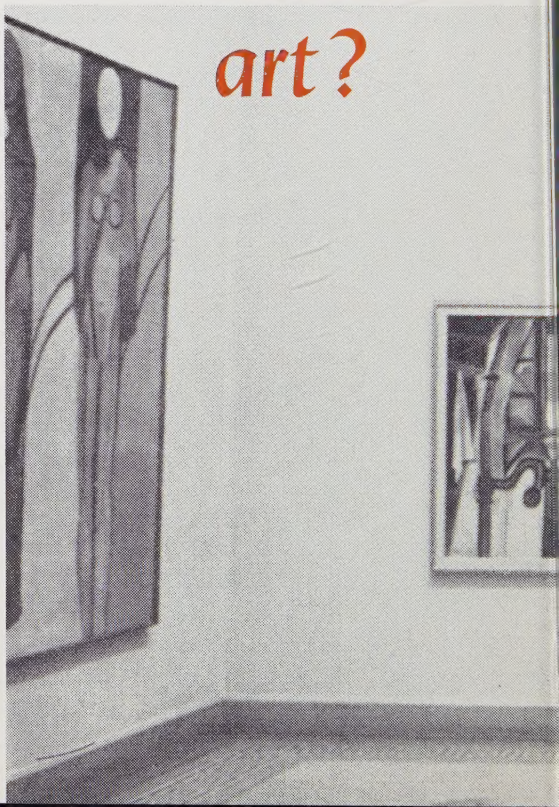
what's with this modern art?



Time: the present

Place: Anywhere, U.S.A.—the Minister's house a week after the annual trip to the City

The Cast: Jane, Bill, Dick and Sue—visiting members of the Youth Fellowship—and Mr. Maler, the pastor.

Dick: Yeah! As I was saying, the trip was great. We all thought so. The only thing—Why did we have to spend so much time in that crazy art museum!

Sue: Most of the kids couldn't see what it all had to do with the church. It was all—sort of strange. And there was nobody we could ask. . . .

Mr. Maler: I'm sorry we couldn't arrange for the group to have a guided tour through the museum. But I've got the next best thing. I picked up color slides of some of the paintings that impressed me, so I could look at them again and get better acquainted. Would you like to look at some of them, and talk about them a bit?

"They look like tin women!"

Group: Great! Yeah! Let's do it!

Mr. Maler (setting up projector): It's strange, isn't it, how unaccustomed we are to using our eyes? Our schools have a blind spot when it comes to introducing us to the arts. The visual arts—painting and sculpture—just aren't a part of our education at all. And we're all so influenced by photography, our color slides, our snapshots, the ads and commercials and TV shows and movies, that we just don't know what to make of a painting that doesn't look like a snapshot. We judge everything and everyone by surface appearance, "photographically."

Now! Let's practice using our eyes. I'll project these paintings on the screen without telling you the title or anything about it, and you do "detective work"—you just use your eyes to share with us what you see. Just speak right out with any adjective or word that describes what you see. We'll start with a fairly easy one. . . .

(Mr. Maler projects Fernand Leger's "THREE WOMEN.")

Group (whistles, laughter, snickering): whisper in the dark: "Wow, they need to hit the Metrecal!"

Mr. Maler: Now isn't this interesting! You're all laughing, but it really isn't a very amusing painting, is it? What are you laughting at? Tell us what you *see*.

Voices: They look like the Tin Women. . . .

Yeah, like they're cut out of metal. . . .

They're all alike. . . .

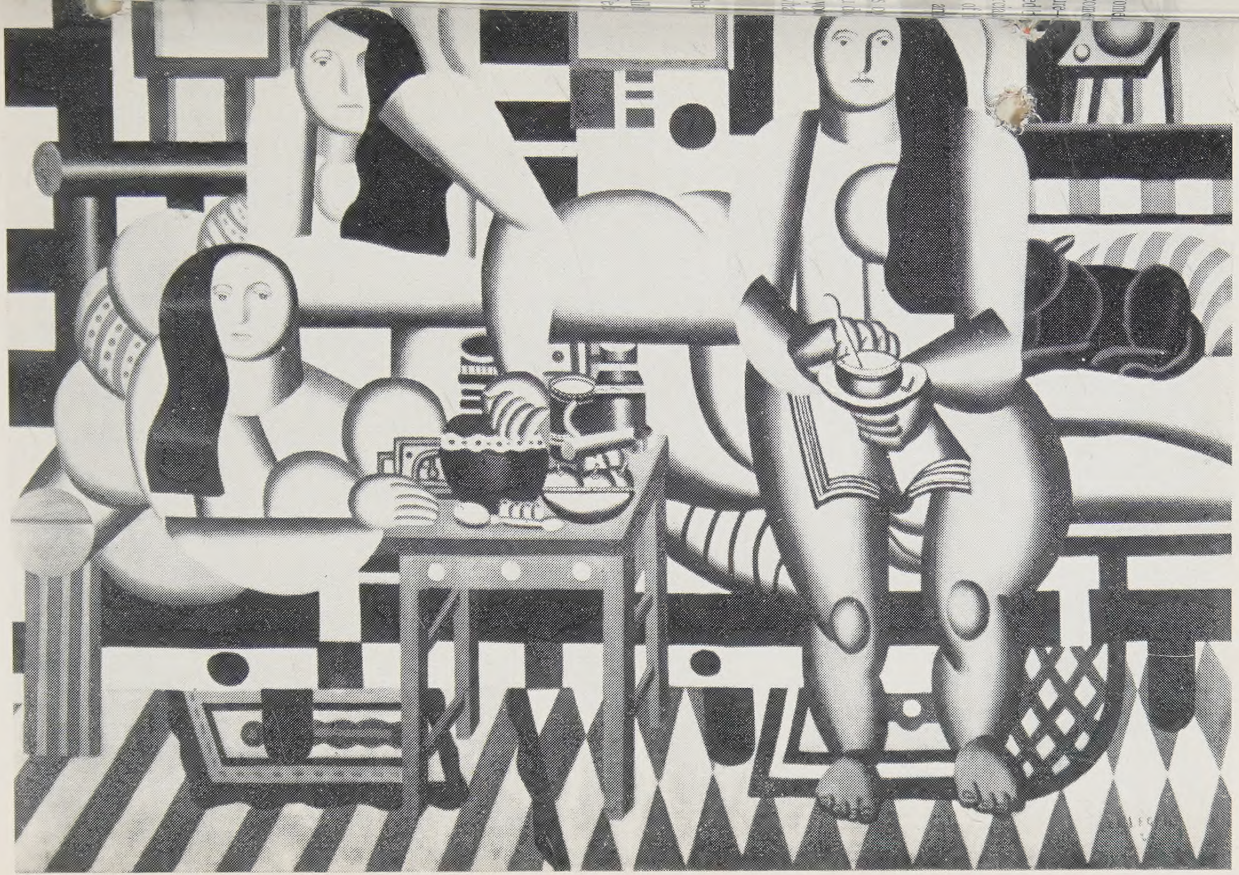
It's a tea party, but it looks like a factory. . . .

Only the furniture has any color to it. . . .

Gee, it's not really very pleasant, is it!

Mr. Maler: Good for you! You're really *seeing* the painting after all. It's perfectly all right to laugh *with* a painting—some artists intend that their paintings be whimsical and amusing so they will evoke laughter. Just don't laugh when you're faced with something you don't understand, or something that's new to you—to hide your real feelings about what the artist is trying to say in the painting.

Now this painting—by the way, it's by the French artist, Fernand Leger, and its title is "THREE WOMEN"—is painted as it is because the artist wants to say something through his particular technique: it's not because the artist is a nut or a phony or trying to be "far out." You said "it looks like a factory" . . . and that's exactly what the artist wants to communicate. You say, "they're all alike," and that's exactly what Leger wants you to see and say.



THREE WOMEN BY FERNAND LEGER/Courtesy Museum of Modern Art/Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

"But it's so ugly . . . or is it?"

What we said about this painting is exactly what this painting is sayi about us. Leger has looked at the character of life today and he h seen that it is mechanical and almost automatic, people are ruled by t clock, the calendar, the schedule, the assembly line quota. And this what he's painted. Don't you know people who you'd describe just you've described the painting? "like metal"—hard, brittle, d, warmth: "all alike"—dress alike, think alike, look alike—afraid to real individuals. . . .

Dick: Huh! That's what they all say about us teenagers!

Mr. Maler: Exactly! That's what "they" say about us *all!* And the arti is saying it, too. Sue, you've really helped me see something new in th painting in what you saw—that the furniture has more color than t people themselves. Haven't you all been in homes like this? Where t *things* in the house were obviously much more interesting and colorf and valuable than the *people*—they'd become sort of colorless extensio of their *things?*

Jane (giggling): This sounds just like one of your sermons!

Mr. Maler: Well, thanks—I guess. It's too bad we have to talk so muc about these paintings, because a painting's intended to communica through the eye and emotion rather than through the mouth. But guess Leger's painting and my sermons have this in common: we're bo trying to communicate deeper insights into the real meaning of life. Th painting helps us understand the real character of our modern life—an perhaps inspire us, as we appreciate it, to try to make ourselves less lik these women, less "alike," less "cold and metallic," more like truly hu man beings. Now, here's another painting for you. . . .

(**Mr. Maler** projects Albert Tucker's "LUNAR LANDSCAPE")

Group (dead silence for a moment): Ugh! What's *THAT?*

Mr. Maler: It's a painting. It's paint on canvas. It's a combination o color, shapes and textures. It's a unique thing in itself, a creation. . .

Bill: But it's so *ugly!*

Mr. Maler: Is it? Look again. It's well-painted, and the colors are ver interesting . . . and it makes a tremendous impression on us, doesn it? No, I don't think we can call it *ugly*. It may be startling, or fore boding, or even fearful—but this doesn't mean it's ugly. Tell me wha images this painting awakens in you—what it reminds you of. . . .

Group: The moon. . . .

Eruptions—like volcanoes. . . .

. . . or sores and cuts. . . .

LUNAR LANDSCAPE BY ALBERT TUCKER/Courtesy Museum of Modern Art

"Most paintings have a meaning,

Birch bark. It's dry and life-less. . . .

Mr. Maler: OK. Now let me take your observations and see if I ca weave them into a "philosophy" based on this painting. It re ds y of the moon, you say—eruptions, a dead surface: well, you re rig again. The Australian artist, Albert Tucker, calls this "LUNAR LAN SCAPE." And it's really a modern image, isn't it? This "lunar lan scape" is our goal, today. Think of the billions invested by both Rus and our country to reach the moon—this cold, dead, eroded landsca

But somebody said the eruptions and cuts here remind her of sor I saw some news photos not long ago of children in Algeria who had had enough to eat for as long as they could remember—and their ski looked very much like this "landscape." And I can imagine that enough fathers in enough lands get to feeling desperate enough abo the fact that their children's skin looks like this, that they might rise in mindless rebellion and start a chain-reaction of war that would lea our own planet looking as dead and lifeless and erupted as this paintin So, perhaps in deeper ways than we realize, the moon *is* our goal. Pe sonally, I'm glad Tucker put that horizon toward the top: I hope means that he senses some hope in our head-strong arms competitio

Jane: Gee, Mr. Maler, if you just sit down and *look* at a painting y really see things in it, don't you? I never realized a painting had such message.

Mr. Maler: That's the trouble with so much talking *about* painting, Jan Most paintings have a meaning, but they don't necessarily have a me sage. In fact, it's usually a pretty bad painting that starts out with the i tention of propaganda, or a sermon, or a message. This is the reason th Russian paintings today—and Nazi paintings yesterday—are so terribl the government insists that every painting "have a message." So Russia every painting has to carry the message of the glories of facto labor, or the wonders of collective farming. And humorously enoug our modern tyrants have been deathly afraid of art like we've bee looking at today, so-called "modern art," because so often it tells t truth instead of pushing a message.

Dick: You know, that sounds a little bit like what we were saying abo Amos in Church School class—you know, in the Bible. . . .?

Mr. Maler: Right! There's a very close connection, Dick. That strang

ey don't necessarily have a message."

character, Amos, came up from the rough South to the sophisticated North, and he looked at life there, and he really SAW it—he saw the social injustices that underlay the very *religious* activities of the people there, and he made the social mistake of *saying* what he *saw*. Naturally the people said about him what people always say about persons who really see: "He's getting us all upset," "he's crazy!", "he's disturbing the way things are," "he's dangerous." So the Senior Minister in the King's Cathedral ordered Amos out of the land—and do you remember what he called him? "O SEER," he said, "O See-er, go back where you come from because we don't like what you see."

Well, the persons of the Bible have always been "see-ers"—they've always made it their vocation to look beneath life's "photographic" surfaces and see the truth under the appearances. Think of Jesus' dealings with the woman at the well of Samaria, and with Zacchaeus: he was a "see-er" . . . . just as you and I are called to be!

The artist's vocation is seeing, too—and I'm sure that this is part of the reason why the atmosphere in so many museums is so church-like—because the people realize that they are in the presence of that which is designed to enable them to see life more truly, deeply, really.

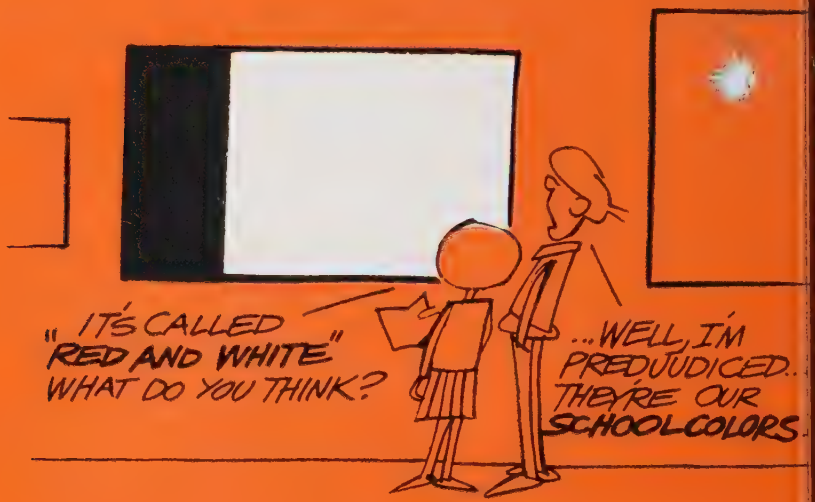
Dick: Well, I don't know. That's an interesting idea, but I still just don't dig that modern stuff. It just doesn't say anything to me.

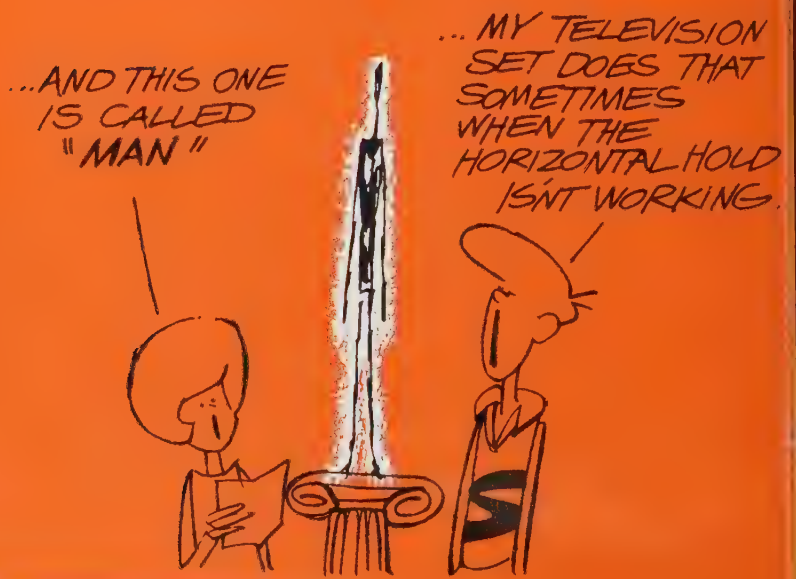
Mr. Maler: It's not a thing that happens to you overnight, Dick. I've spent many years encountering modern art, and at the start I didn't like it or understand it. But strangely enough, as I came to see how the people of the Bible looked at life, and how they expressed their vision, I came to have a greater and greater understanding into the insight and vision of the best of our artists today. You don't have to *like* modern art, Dick. In fact, it's sheer hypocrisy to act as though you do when you don't! Just be aware that the best of our modern artists share with Amos and Jesus the common vocation of seeing the undercover truth about life, and that their uncompromising vision can be a real ministry to the church, which so desperately needs again Jesus' healing act of opening the blind eyes so we can really see the world. I guess that's why we spent so much time in that crazy art museum!

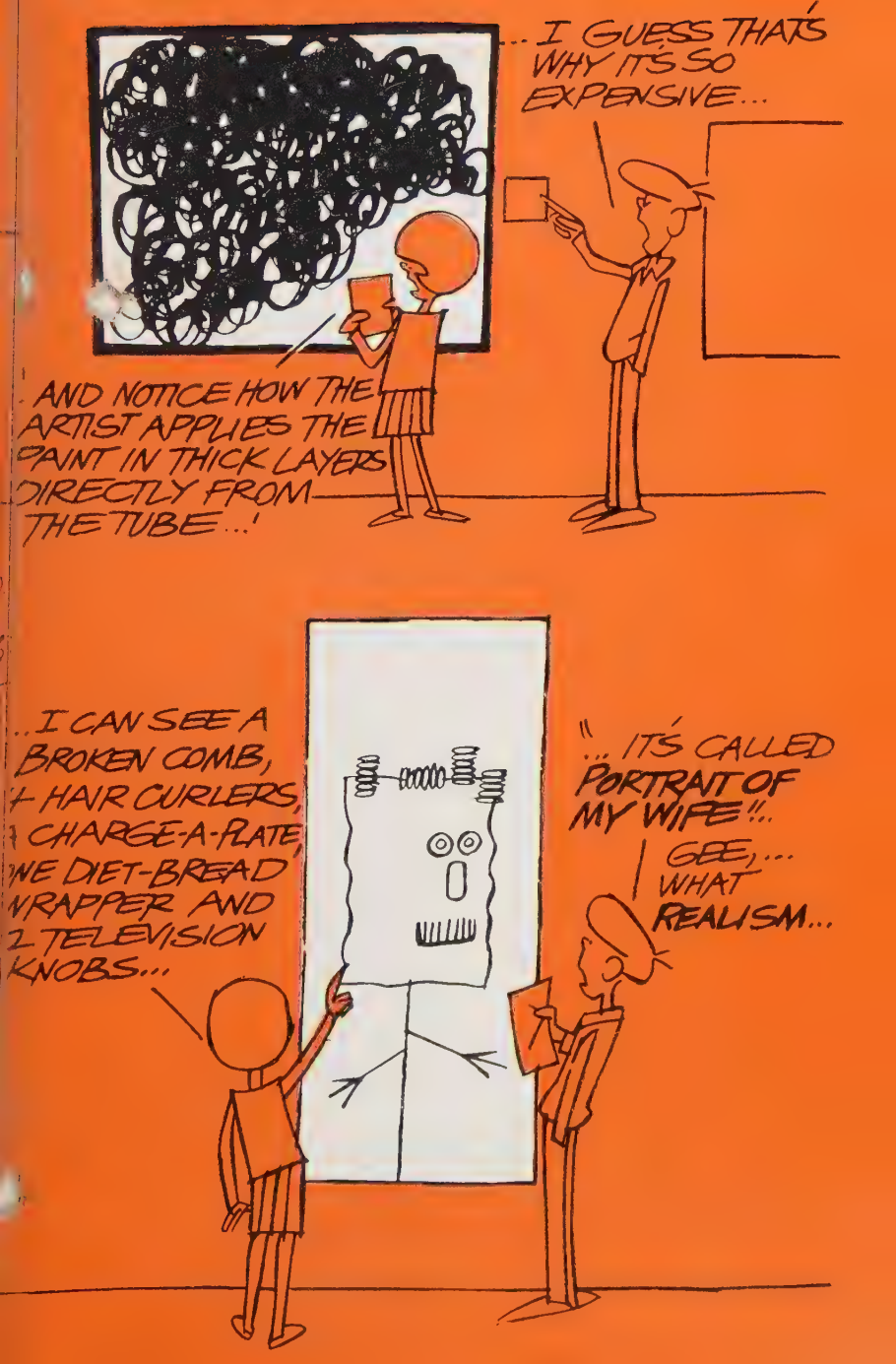
J. THOMAS LEAMON

Exhibit of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture

cartoon story by David Harbaugh






...I GUESS THAT'S WHY IT'S SO EXPENSIVE...
...AND NOTICE HOW THE ARTIST APPLIES THE PAINT IN THICK LAYERS DIRECTLY FROM THE TUBE...!
...I CAN SEE A BROKEN COMB, 4 HAIR CURLERS, A CHARGE-A-PLATE, ONE DIET-BREAD WRAPPER AND 2 TELEVISION KNOBS...
"... IT'S CALLED PORTRAIT OF MY WIFE!"..
GEE,... WHAT REALISM...

. . . was
nothing
he created
good enough
for God?

Portrait of Michelangelo by his contemporary Vasari. The square in Florence (right) where a copy of "David" stands today.

Michelangelo was born seventeen years before Columbus discovered America. During the height of his artistic work, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on a church door in another part of Europe. Michelangelo died in 1564, a few weeks before the birth of Shakespeare. The productivity of Western European civilization during these two centuries which Michelangelo's life spanned has probably never been equalled. As much as it was a Renaissance, or "re-birth," it was also a "new birth"—of ideas, of art, of science, of government, of man's ability to respond creatively to the worlds in which he found himself.

Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a patchwork quilt of separate city states, each vying for the power of wealth and land and influence. If an artist wanted to exist in those days, he had to receive commissions for his work from these powers. Michelangelo was thrown back and forth between rulers and Popes, and rulers who became Popes, utterly dependent upon their whims and fancies and the success of their politics. Often a statue would be only half-completed when its commissioner died, and the next ruler would want another started according to his own specifications. Often Michelangelo was penniless, sleeping beside his work amidst the dust and shavings which covered his room, waking to dress in his only suit and present his shabby appearance in the elegant court of a new power.

Michelangelo lived most of his early years in Florence, the artistic center of the Italian Renaissance. He had no interest in school and his work was poor. His father grew angry with him. He could not understand his son. But Michelangelo cared for only one thing—to become an artist.

At the age of sixteen he was introduced to Lorenzo de Medici, ruler of the Florentine Republic, patron of the arts. Lorenzo saw in the boy Michelangelo imminent genius and invited him into his household. On the day of his announcement Michelangelo was being congratulated by his teacher when one of the other pupils, an angry jealous young student, started a fight with him. After a few moments Michelangelo sank to the ground, his face covered with blood. His nose had been broken. The doctors announced sadly that he would be disfigured for life. He fell into a state of depression and melancholy which was to haunt him the rest of his days.

Michelangelo arrived at the palace a sad boy with his bundle of clothes and his sculptor's tools. In the palace his real education began. The Renaissance was at its height. Here he heard the dialogues of Plato and the golden poetry of Greece. He was greatly affected by this Renaissance humanism. But his soul was to be touched by another influence. The preaching of Savonarola trampled upon everything that the Renaissance loved and everything they did. He went often to hear him. One day upon leaving the Dominican reformer, Michelangelo's brother announced that he was leaving the world and its empty pleasures and entering a Dominican monastery. This deeply moved Michelangelo who himself had been touched by the preacher of Florence.

Michelangelo's own thoughts were in accord with Savonarola, but the culture which he had learned was deeply engraved on his mind and senses. This conflict remained within him and his works revealed it. Two years after he arrived at the palace, Lorenzo died. Michelangelo in his grief realized that an age had come to an end. Lorenzo had been the soul of the Renaissance, an age when men tried to reconcile the spirit and the flesh. Michelangelo began to question whether they had been right in thinking that beauty was the most important thing in life and whether there was not a higher reality in which the senses played no part, an aspect of man where his soul was in direct communion with God. As an artist he knew that we could express truths, the truths of the senses and the type of beauty that stimulated men. This, too, he knew to be, but how real was his question.

In November of 1494 Florence was threatened by the advance of the French army under Charles VIII. The Florentine ruler fled in exile, and Michelangelo left for Rome.

BACCHUS (sculpture). While in Rome he was commissioned in 1496 to create a "Bacchus" for a garden. The poet Shelley wrote concerning this work, "The countenance of this figure is the most revolting mistake of the spirit and meaning of Bacchus. It looks drunken, brutal and narrow-minded, and has an expression of dissoluteness that is most revolting."

But could it not be that this was intentional? Could it not be that this naturalistic rendering of a semi-paralyzed, drunken god was Michelangelo's innovation of a Christian element into a pagan theme? Does the power of Sin find expression in the shape of this drunken god?

Two years after the completion of this sculpture he received word that the man whose faith had inspired him, Savonarola, had been hung as a schismatic and heretic in the market-place of Florence. Convinced of the truth of Savonarola's message and tormented by his execution, he became more and more appalled by the paganism he found in Rome. He would have departed immediately if he had not been asked by a French cardinal to create a "Pieta."

THE PIETA at St. Peter's, Rome (sculpture). A young man of only twenty-four, Michelangelo produced that "Pieta." No subject would have better suited his mood of deep sadness. It took him two years and with its creation a new spirit was born in his heart. He had waited months for the seven-foot block of perfect marble to arrive from the Carrara hills. Then he began to sketch, mostly men on the streets or in the baths, trying to find that sinewy sensitivity of the Christ's body. He worked in clay to capture the vibrancy of the flesh, and in wax to mold the elasticity of life. But none of his models

Detail from the first of many "Pietas" which the artist was to carve in his lifetime. This one stands in St. Peter's in Rome.

Detail from "The Last Judgment," a painting on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel in Rom
In the lower right-hand corner is the skin of Michelangelo held by one of the saints, reveali
the artist's idea about God's judgment on him.

michelangelo

or drawings were a fixed concept; that would come only when he touched his hands to the pure white marble.

The emphasis in this "Pieta" is on Mary. Although her son is 33 years old, she is still young as the sculptor thought a virgin to be. Her son is dead. She has great feeling towards him, but he is passive. He is heavy as he lies across her, but her burden of grief is heavier. There is no violence, the nail marks are only small dots. Michelangelo's contemporaries did not like the theme of the "Pieta;" it was too tragic and painful. That it is. But does not the gentle beauty of the mother recapture the soul's beauty, unaffected by time or emotion?

The back of the "Pieta" was not finished since it was to stand in a niche. The first day it was moved to St. Peter's the young sculptor stayed near it watching people's reactions. Most hardly noticed it; but for those who did, their question was who had done it. So that night Michelangelo stole into the dark cathedral and carved his name on Mary's dress band so that all would know the artist.

DAVID (sculpture). Michelangelo returned to Florence in 1501 to remain until 1505. A number of great works were created during this fruitful period. One of these was "David." A work had been started by another sculptor entitled "The Giant." Michelangelo was commissioned to finish it. The general form was predetermined by the piece of marble but what would his giant be? His movement away from paganism kept him from producing a Hercules or Atlas. He was convinced that his giant must be a Christian hero and not a mythological one. He saw in the marble the young man David who as a youthful shepherd had conquered the Philistines. In Michelangelo was a new vision of David; it was a David who triumphed because God was his ally. David was a "giant," a champion, because God was with him. Did Michelangelo think this was what David looked like or is this a spiritual interpretation of what David symbolized? Is this merely an idealistic statue depicting the glory of man or is it an attempt at showing man made great, made triumphant, made glorious by being used by God?

In all of Michelangelo's work, and especially David, we are aware of the pure physical power and realism of his figures. His knowledge of anatomy was painstakingly acquired. While living at home in Florence during his youth, Michelangelo would steal away at night to a monastery where dead bodies were prepared for burial. By the light of a candle, he would dissect these bodies, carefully examining bones and muscles, trying to determine how they functioned. After hours of work he would stop at a local cafe to erase the smells of death from his body with the smells of smoke and wine, and then he would stumble home at dawn to be greeted by an angry father lamenting his son's apparent irresponsible night life.

THE SISTINE CHAPEL (painting). In 1505 a new pope, Julius II, had been elected and once more Michelangelo was called to Rome to paint the

michelangelo

ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He was now thirty-three years of age. In vain Michelangelo tried to point out that he was not a painter, but a sculptor. But Pope Julius had made up his mind that he should paint the Sistine. He had no assistants and no one was allowed to be present during the creation. Two other human beings, apprentices, were on the scaffolding but they were silent, almost invisible. The physical stamina necessary to complete his work is almost as awe-inspiring as the work itself. For four years he lay on his back painting large figures acting and interacting with grandiose movement and delicate sensitivity. Sometimes he was too tired to climb down the scaffolding at night and so he slept high in the chapel ready to resume work the next day.

The ceiling participated in his life, for it was an outlet for his soul's joy and suffering. Just as suffering was at the center of his life he saw suffering at the heart of all life. The creation itself was an awakening of life which is also suffering. He saw the soul as imprisoned by the flesh and for this reason it suffers. The soul longs to cast off its casing symbolized in Adam who gazes at his creator in gratitude for the spark of life and physical existence but longs for a purely spiritual existence. He longs to cast away his earthly frame so that he might be united with God.

His figures stand naked before God. He believed firmly in the doctrine of divine purpose. God had created man in his own image. It was for this reason that man's body must be for the artist the most beautiful manifestation. Yet he knew that man's body, however perfect, was valueless without the soul. Somehow he had to translate symbolically, through expression and form, eternal strength without losing the strength of the eternal. He had to speak of things spiritual without neglecting things material through which the spiritual becomes known. Goethe, the eighteenth century German poet wrote, "No one who has not see the Sistine Chapel can have a clear idea of what a human being can achieve."

THE LAST JUDGEMENT (painting). In 1536 Pope Paul III ordered Michelangelo to begin the altar-piece for the Sistine Chapel, entitled, "The Last Judgement." We are told that Paul III, overcome by its sight, fell on his knees and broke into prayers saying, "Lord, charge me not with my sins when Thou shalt come in the Day of Judgement." While he made an enormous impression on his contemporaries in art, he received a great deal of hostility from many theologians who were filled with the spirit of the Counter-reformation. (The Protestant Reformation had begun nineteen years before.) Under the popes that followed Michelangelo's death, his nudities were painted over as were other aspects of the altarpiece.

MOSES (sculpture). After completing the Sistine ceiling, Michelangelo eagerly returned to the three-dimensional work of his marble. He had been commissioned by Pope Julius to do a series of figures for his tomb. One of

Detail of "Moses," a massive, eight foot seated figure whose face portrays a person who knew both the ways of men and the ways of God.

michelangelo

these was "Moses." The Pope died before he saw his work complet

The artist envisioned Moses as neither despairing nor fierce, but rat as a man with a resolve and determination that his people would unc stand and obey the divine law which had been given through him. T piece is arranged so as to create a tension of balance and movement betw the forward right leg and the withdrawn left leg, between the resting ha and the stone tablets toward which it points. The finely chiseled hair a painted texture in which one can almost see what looks like the lines o brush. Goethe admired this statue so much that he kept a bronze copy o on his writing desk.

THE FLORENTINE PIETA (Entombment). Wealth was now his, but never cared for money and he continued to live like a poor man, of dining on a crust of bread. He treated himself severely, he slept little a then often in his clothes, rising by night to work on his statues. During whole life he had been solitary, partly by preference, partly by devotion his art. He lived like a monk devoted to his Lord. He worked only for joy of serving Him. In order to obey his Master he refused in old age spend any time in tranquility. He wrote, "I remain at my post becaus love God and have put all my trust in him." He felt himself to be an strument of God.

The "Florentine Pieta" was his last piece of sculpture. It demonstra the state of his detachment. He was no longer moved by faith in his a but only in Christ. His mind and strength could not resist the need create as if the Spirit of God moved within him. His criticism of his o work became great. Nothing was good enough for God or spoke w enough for his creator. He broke the "Pieta" and gave it to his servant w saved the pieces and had it reconstructed. Michelangelo, we are to represented himself in the old man with the sorrowful face that supports t body of Christ in this sculpture.

Few works were finished by him in the last period of his life. An ene of tradition or imitation in art, he was a great dreamer. His sculpture a us to think about it and to brood over it. It proposes new questions to and torments our spirits. It calls upon us for new thoughts and new fai

THE CUPOLA OF ST. PETER'S, ROME. Michelangelo was also architect. One month before his death he was appointed architect for Peter's. He was eighty-nine years old. His strength remained, though face showed the crushing years of life. He saw this creation as a missi from God. "I think that I have been placed in this post by God. . . . I ser through the love of God and place all my hopes in Him." St. Peter's was him a Gospel which he must give to the world. It was to be his farewell earth. He attempted to capture the renunciation of all earthly things having his building rise upward. To crown his work he designed a dor

which would be a true crown, a three-story dome like the Pope's crown, to represent to the whole world the see of the head of Christendom.

He never saw his work completed. But toward the end of his life, his soul and body knew unity with God. Still his heart remained perplexed by his feeling of humble failure to serve his Lord. He wrote

"Freed from a burden sore and grievous band,
Dear Lord and from this wearying world untied,
Like a frail bark I turn me to Thy side,
As from a fierce storm to a tranquil land.

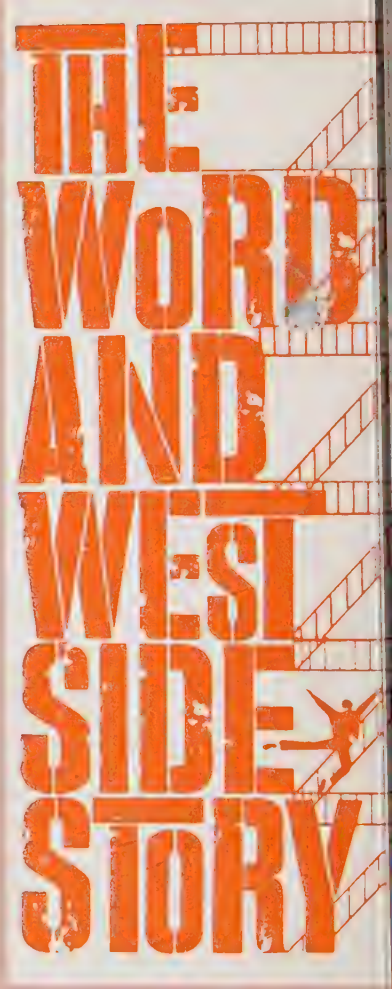
Thy thorns, Thy nails, and either bleeding hand,
With Thy mild piteous face, provide
Promise of help and mercies multiplied,
And hope that yet my soul secure may stand.

Death never frightened him because he was convinced that something in man survived his body. In that faith and having given of his life and talent to serve God and witness to Him, he died February 18, 1564, having left for us to ponder his creations produced in sorrow and yet in hope that we, too, might come to know the God revealed in Jesus Christ who enters into man's life and history, transforming us for this purpose.

—JOHN H. WESTERHOFF

The dome of St. Peter's was built from a model after the artist died. Its soaring beauty and spacious interior are noble monuments to the artist and the faith.

THE WORD AND WEST SIDE STORY



West Side Story was a highly popular and successful musical play and . . . a similarly well-received motion picture. . . . But it is also many other things and all at the same time.

First of all, it is a business venture. Some people invested money in this property, hoping for a profit. *West Side Story* is commerce. But *West Side Story* is also literature—it is an attempt to retell, in a contemporary idiom, the story of Romeo and Juliet. *West Side Story* is music . . . it appears to me that it is good music.

West Side Story is also a social document. It is sociology . . . For example, the song "Gee, Officer Krupke!" is a more accurate insight into how the kids in the gangs in New York City feel toward the police and the courts and the social workers and the psychiatrists and their parents and the places where they live than almost any other social document that presently exists.

But *West Side Story* is also theology, and it is theology while it remains theatre and motion picture, a business enterprise, literature, music, sociology. It is theology while it remains all of the other things which it is, and without violating the integrity of any of the other things which it is. In fact, these other things are the vehicles through which *West Side Story* as theology is conveyed.

What happens in *West Side Story*? Two gangs, one Puerto Rican, t other Italian, are deeply estranged. They are enemies. They fight. A b is killed. And out of the death of the boy, the gangs are reconciled. Do that sound familiar? It is familiar if you have ever opened and listened the Bible. It is familiar if you have ever heard and beheld the Gospel . .

One dies and many are reconciled. That is the Word of God. And he it is: a Word hidden within all the words and actions of the play and m tion picture, and within all the other things which *West Side Story* is in i common appearance—that is, as literature, music, commerce, sociology, et

West Side Story commends itself as an example of how the Word

God is present in the common life of the world, in part because it is now so widely familiar, but also for another reason, which is that, in a curious way, *West Side Story* really happened.

Some summers ago, in New York, there were 11 homicides as a result of gang warfare. One of the killings . . . happened in the East Harlem neighborhood. Two gangs—one Italian, one Puerto Rican—were engaged in skirmishes over the respective territories that each would occupy for the summer. . . . The skirmishes were a part, of course, of a larger warfare precipitated by the Puerto Rican migration to the city and by the necessity for Puerto Rican boys to fight for some space in which to live and by the resistance of those already in the neighborhood to these newcomers.

In the fight between these two particular gangs . . . a boy was killed. The boy who was killed happened to be the brother of the war counselor of one of the gangs. In gang society, the war counselor is the governor of the gang—the one who makes policy, the leader. He is not always the strongest or toughest boy in the gang, but he is commonly the smartest and most courageous. Unlike adult politics, when these kids choose a leader, they choose the one who has brains and guts. In any case, the boy who died was the brother of such a war counselor.

On the night of the fight, on the night of the death, the brother of the boy who had been killed spent a long time alone, mourning his brother and brooding about his death and the meaning of his death. And then he went to the war counselor of the other gang, to his mortal enemy, to the one whose gang killed his brother. He went alone. He went without weapons or bodyguards or tricks. He went alone—without advice from anybody—clergy or lawyers or social workers or police or the Youth Board or anybody else. He went alone to his enemy—and they talked of what had happened . . .

And then these two boys went to leaders of several other gangs in that immediate section of East Harlem. And, after a while, a council was formed to discuss and negotiate the differences among the gangs involved. Some very radical things have come from this. For one thing, there has been no serious physical violence—and no homicides involving boys from these gangs—since the council was formed. Another is that they even invited a cop, the precinct captain, to sit down with them and say whatever he wanted to say and hear what they had to say . . .

The Word of God—the same Word uttered and observed in the sanctuary—is hidden in the ordinary life of these boys in gang society and in the violence of the streets which is part of their everyday existence. And so it is within the common life of all the world.

The simplicity of the Christian life is this, that Christians are free to live within the common life of the world, to live in the assurance and excitement of knowing that they live in the presence of God's Word, no matter where, no matter what.

—WILLIAM STRINGFELLOW

Mr. Stringfellow is an Episcopalian and an attorney. This essay is an excerpt from his book **A Public and Private Faith**, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962. Used by permission.

SHAPES O

How artists, without knowing, f
what scientists were dreaming, a
with new forms foretold the comi
of the space age.

In the days before rockets,
shabby sculptor in Paris tried
shape a bird at the moment of flig
into space. As he worked, the sha
of the bird disappeared, and
found himself creating a long tapo
ing form pointing upward into spac

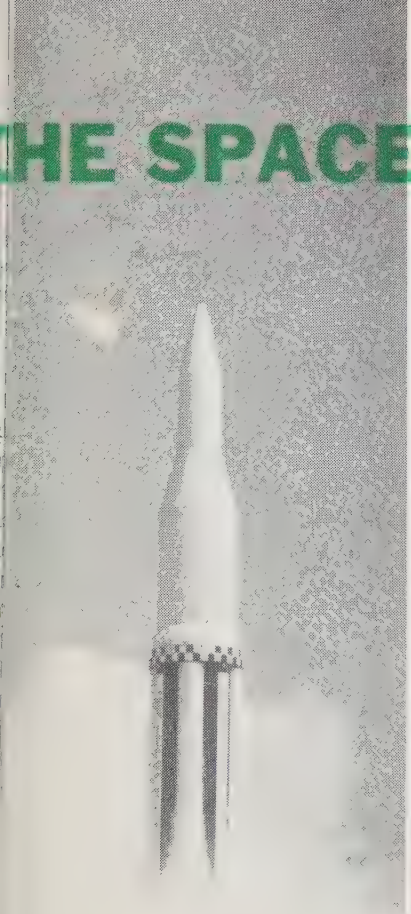
The sculptor, Constantin Bra
cusi, the son of Rumanian paren
had walked from his home in t
Balkans to Paris, to study art. Whi
working at night as a dishwasher,
had studied in the daytime at t
famous Beaux Arts school. B
soon he had become dissatisfied. H
didn't want to model human figur
which he called, "merely carvi
beefsteak!"

He wanted to bring out of woo
stone and bronze what the eye cou
not see, the meaning, the feeling
things. In a crumbling studio, c
the deadend Impasse Ronsin, h
made egg shapes, fish shapes ar
seal shapes to suggest fertility ar
life in the sea.

Then one day in 1913, as th
first rickety planes rose over Pari
he found himself creating a bi
form. But it was not the bird h
wanted to show. He wanted to sho
the feeling of rising into space. An

BIRD IN SPACE (1919) BY CONSTANTIN BRA
CUSI/Courtesy Museum of Modern Art

HE SPACE AGE



gradually he began to shape a form like a flame rising upward. For two decades he was to work, shaping and polishing in marble and bronze, always the same form, a form suggesting the flight into space!

Of course he had not heard of Ziolkovsky, the obscure, mad Russian who had dreamed in 1903 of making rockets. In America, the American physicist, Robert Goddard, father of American rocketry, had experimented secretly, lest he be thought at the edge of lunacy. And no one in Paris had troubled to read the essay which the scientist Robert Esnault-Pelterie had written in 1912, suggesting the formulae for travel by men to the moon!

Yet artists are delicate seismographs. With their invisible antennae they pick up, if not the thoughts, at least the feelings of their time. And as the early rocketeers worked, Brancusi, as if possessed, kept shaping over and over again the abstract form suggesting flight into space. He made a white marble form called, *Bird in Space*. He made a gleaming bronze form. He polished each years long, to bring out what he called, "the truth of the material."

People heard and came. In 1926, the American photographer and art collector, Edward Steichen visited Brancusi's studio on the Impasse

Ronsin. He watched the sculptor polishing a tall, slender bronze form which rose upward like a flame.

"Can I buy this?" he asked. The sculptor hesitated saying he hoped to work on the form, *Bird in Space*, a little bit longer. Steichen prevailed. Brancusi parted from the form with tears in his eyes.

When this form arrived at the United States Customs Office, the officials who had never seen an example of abstract art before, looked at it puzzled. They saw no resemblance to a bird, and reasoned that this surely could not be a work of art entitled to enter the country free.

Scratching their heads, the officials dumped the form on which Brancusi had labored so patiently onto the scale. Then weighing it, they taxed it by the pound as a piece of metal! The owner of the work, Steichen, paid the tax under protest and took the case to court. The judge, puzzled, asked, "Would you recognize this as a bird in the forest?" The First Assistant Attorney General inquired sarcastically, "Could not any good mechanic do just as well with a brass pipe?"

Famous artists came to testify for Brancusi and art. The noted English sculptor, Jacob Epstein, brought into court an ancient work which resembled no object which witnesses could recognize. Yet, he pointed out, it had been considered for more than three centuries, a work of art!

All during the trial, the subject of the dispute, the bronze form li flame rested on a table before court, "seemingly," said a n paper, "poised for a flight up into space."

The case dragged on for years. Finally the judges grudgi declared Brancusi's form entitle enter the country duty free, therefore a work of art. In this there was welcomed into this c try what many have since called the first artistic expressio the coming space age.

Other artists felt and begar express new space feelings in t work. A young English sculp Henry Moore, could not bea make anything solid. He cut o ings in blocks of wood and st He made these areas of open s part of his figures. He carved w and stone. He also carved sp

He made family groups and n sive reclining figures with areas open space through which the tant blue sky could be seen. made wooden shapes laced string so that space could through like the wind throug harp.

A young American visiting Paris found a new way to exp space feelings. He cut paper-t shapes of metal light as breath. painted them in gay colors. T balancing them delicately on wires, he made patterns in sp

An artist friend who saw th shapes moving, declared, "They

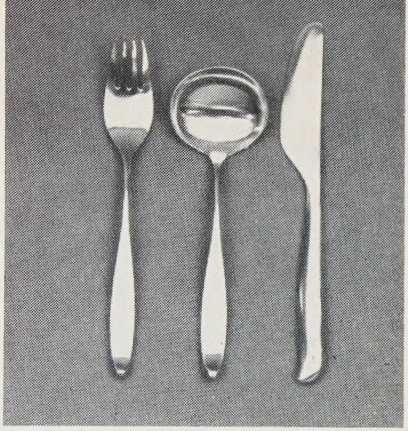
bile. We should call these new ms *mobiles.*" In this way there s born a new art form suggesting unceasing motion of the com- space age, Alexander Calder's ty *mobiles.*

Everywhere artists felt the im- lse to create with new forms and h new materials. Two sculptors, eing from the countries where n could no longer be free, ought with them a new art sug- sting the space age.

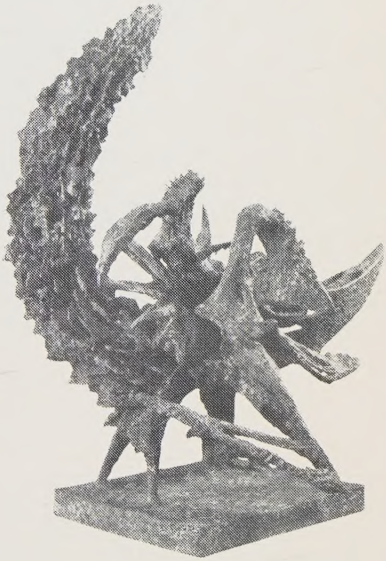
Using machine-made materials e treated metals and gleaming xiglas, the half brothers Antoine vsner and Naum Gabo, shaped nged forms which they called *nstructions.* Along their edged ms these constructions invited endless flow of space.

At a German school of art called Bauhaus or *building house,* the chitect-teacher, Walter Gropius, pired his students to design sses, tumblers, toasters, all sorts machine-made objects with a feel- of space. Functional, streamlined e missiles, these objects from ttles to sweepers intrigue the eye h the unimpeded flow of space.

An architect of the American d-West, filled with the feeling of ciousness of the prairies, de- ned the homes of a type never before. Long, low, blending the horizon, these new homes, igned by Frank Lloyd Wright, ke us draw the deep breath of nterrupted space.

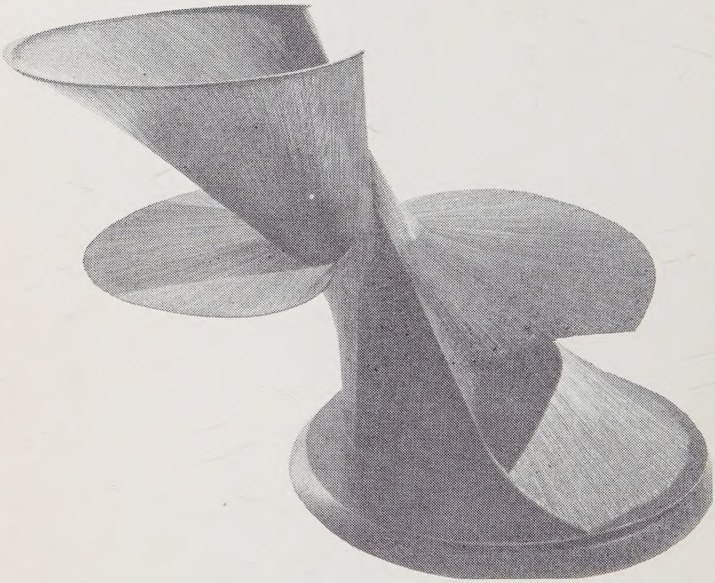


STAINLESS STEEL FLATWARE BY DON WALLANCE/Courtesy Museum of Modern Art



SPECTRE OF KITTY HAWK BY THEODORE J. ROSZAK/Courtesy Museum of Modern Art

CHAIR DESIGNED BY CHARLES EAMES/Courtesy Herman - Miller Zeeland

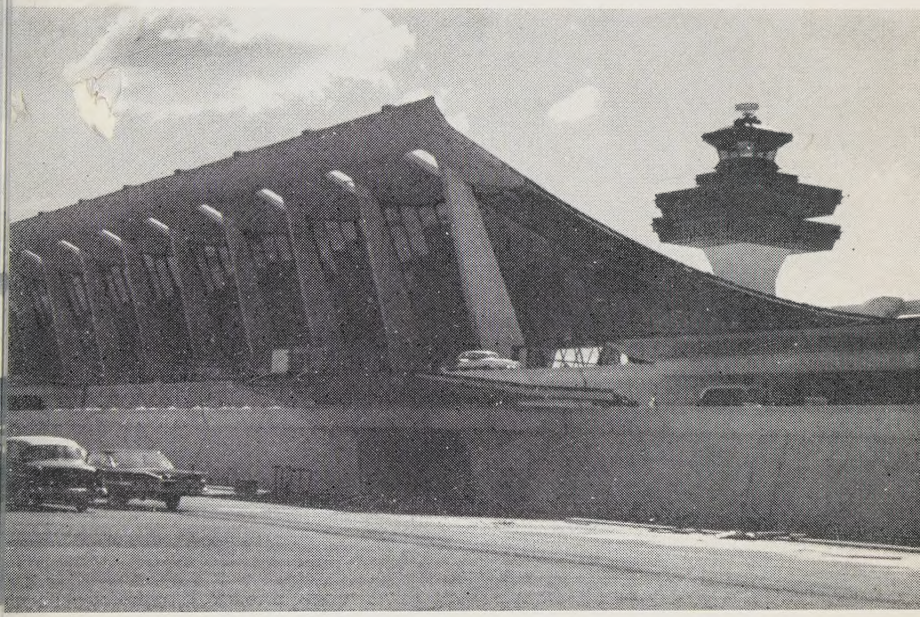


DEVELOPABLE COLUMN BY ANTOINE PEVSNER/Courtesy Museum of Modern Art

The walls of glass invite the outside. The sliding walls make the indoor life pour outside. Inside walls between rooms disappear to give way to airy partitions on slender legs. In the space-divided house there is a feeling of space everywhere. For these space-filled homes, designers created a new type of furnishings, lighter, not weighted to the floor with draperies, slender, stream-lined, bathed in space.

In the days between 1903, wh Ziolkovsky first deamed of rock and that day when rockets rea rose, all our living was made o by a feeling which stirred art and scientists—the feeling of space age.

Now in the architecture of o day, we can see this feeling pow fully dramatized. Perhaps one the most interesting examples is ramp in the new Convair-Ast



ne new Dulles airport terminal building in Washington, D.C. designed by Saarinen fans out into pace.

utics Plant, where scientists busy emselves with travel to the moon. his ramp, suspended by aluminum ds like filaments, spirals in a glass-lled reception hall over a pool. hose, ascending on this walk like ribbon to heaven, have the feeling loating in space (see cover).

n the new Dulles Airport near ashington, with its roof hung like hammock on pylons, and its glass lls looking out on endless vistas, visitors also have this eerie feeling of endless space.

Fifty years have passed since Brancusi shaped in his studio a bird which turned into a symbol of flight in space. In that time, all things around us have changed as the thoughts of men stream upward, away from the earth and toward that endless universe surrounding us which we call space.

—RACHEL BAKER

PSALMS OF DAVID

Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!

—Psalm 139: 23-24

Oh Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tent?
Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?

He who walks blamelessly, and does what is right,
and speaks truth from his heart;
who does not slander with his tongue,
and does no evil to his friend,
nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor;
in whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
but who honors those who fear the Lord;
who swears to his own hurt and does not change;
who does not put out his money at interest,
and does not take a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things shall never be moved.

—Psalm 15

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence,
and take not thy holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

—Psalm 51: 10-12

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready!
I will sing, I will sing praises!
Awake, my soul!
Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn!
I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, among the people;
I will sing praises to thee among the nations.
For thy steadfast love is great above the heavens,
thy faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

—Psalm 108: 1-4